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241 If one may admit color as one of the elements of the landscape of a region, one certainly cannot ignore it in the agricultural landscape of the Szechuan Basin. In fact the unusual combination of color in the agricultural areas adds much to the charm of the Basin. The bright red, purple, and chocolate-tints of the soil, the fresh-green of the grain crops, vegetables, and flowers, the brilliant yellow of the rape, the white-but-spattered-with-yellow-and-pink flowers of the tung trees, the snow-white color of the white-wax trees, and many other colors silhouetted against the ever-present dark-green background of the luxurious vegetation throughout the Basin, all add to its special picturesqueness.

231 The normal assortment of livestock life on the farms is a second noticeable feature of the rural scene in the Basin. Fowls, geese, ducks, pigs, bees are especially prevalent. Horses and mules are few. Oxen and water-buffalos are the most important animals on the farm. The buffalos particularly serve in various capacities, such as to plough and to burrow the rice fields, to mill the grains, to press the oils, and to perform a hundred and one other duties. Aside from human beings, they are really the other important "flesh-motors" of the Basin. On the farms, herds and herds of such bulky, slow-moving, long-horned buffalos may frequently be seen (Fig. 16).

235 Duck rearing is another activity of importance (Fig. 17), particularly in the Chengtu Plain. During the months of November and December one may see enormous flocks of ducks being driven slowly over the flooded paddy fields of Chengtu Plain. They feed on the aquatic life in the waters as they are driven along. In two or three months the flocks arrive at Chengtu, fat for market, and at no one's expense!

5. The Character and Distribution of Cities and Towns

361 One of the outstanding features of the urban settlements of the Basin is that most of the relatively important urban units of the Basin are situated on the terraces near the banks of the principal streams (Fig. 7). For instance, beginning from Fengchieh up to I-ping, following the Yangtse Valley, one may count no less than fifteen of these urban units, including the most populous cities and trading towns of the Basin (Fig. 7). The

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The principal overseas market for Szechuan silk at present (shortly before the war) is in the United States, France, and Burma. For exports to the first two markets, silk is normally shipped down the Yangtse to Shanghai for overseas transhipment, whereas silk for the Burma market ordinarily goes by way of the Lo-shan-I-ping via Kunming, Yunnan route. The difficulty of transportation by way of the latter route is stupendous. Ordinarily it takes at least three to four months, by human carriers, for one trip from Lo-shan to Rangoon, Burma, and the transportation costs sometimes run as high as two-fifths of the value of the goods themselves. Unless transportation facilities along this route are improved, no matter how strongly the Burmese favor Szechuan silk, as has been the case thus far, the silk trade between Szechuan and Burma will always remain greatly limited. 231 438

Besides the difficulty of transportation, silk production in the Basin is now confronted by new handicaps. Silkworm rearing, formerly a profitable supplementary rural industry, has now given way to the production of grains (many mulberry fields have been converted into grain fields) which have been commanding high prices during recent years as a result of the increasing demand for foodstuffs due to the war.

e) Duck feathers and other products.--One cannot very well close this section on livestock production of the Szechuan Basin without mentioning another interesting product--duck feathers. The Basin normally has a total of over fifteen million ducks.[1] They are especially concentrated in the districts around Chengtu Plain, Lo-shan, I-ping, Yo-chi, and Pa-hsien (Fig. 39). Besides the wide use of the meat for food by the natives, the feathers are especially valued by the wealthy people for use in making light, warm and soft comforters, filling pillow cases and quilts, spinning yarn, weaving cloth, and a number of other uses. 237 [235].

The total production of duck feathers is estimated to be approximately 10,000 piculs annually. Approximately 70 per cent of the total product is shipped to markets overseas. Before the war, France was the leading customer, taking 30 per cent of the total export, with the United States and Great Britain each taking 20 per cent, and Germany and Japan each taking about 10 per cent. 237 439

[1] Report of the Bureau of Central Agricultural Research (1939), p. 53.